tower

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TOWER

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TOWER

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Only the Vultures Can Stay

By Julia Studebaker

"I hope it's like I want it to be," thought Ann. She leaned her head against the cool window and watched the desert slip by. Beside her, Eddie was asleep, one hand dangling, the new gold band glinting in the bright sunlight. Ann turned around and took hold of his hand. "Eddie. Eddie!" He grunted and opened his eyes. "Honey, talk to me a little bit. I'm too excited to sleep," Ann said. He stretched, straightened up, and put his arm around her. "You poor kid. You really wanted to get away, didn't you?" As she put her head on his shoulder her mouth tightened. After a moment she asked, "Will the camp be nice? Tell me some more about it." Ed turned his head and looked out the window. "Um, I guess it will be O.K.," he muttered, and started to doze again. "There won't be anybody there to boss us, like they did at home, will there, Eddie?" Ed grinned a little, and said, "Plenty of bossin' in an army camp, honey." He closed his eyes and promptly fell asleep again. Ann looked at his bent head and wondered what the future held for them.

When they got off the bus all the passengers were sleeping. The others were going on to Tucson, fifty miles further through the desert, but the trip ended for Ann and Ed at Fort Harrison.

Ann looked at the long rows of adobe colored barracks. Piles of gritty sand lay along the curbs of the desolated streets, and shiny black bugs wove their tunnels through them. The bugs and the wide-winged vultures arching above the desert were the only movements in all this vacancy. It was an odd atmosphere for an army post—only silence and heat and stagnation of spirit.

While she looked around she said disgustedly, "Kansas was bad, but this sure beats it." She paused and watched the black bugs. She thought, "Do we have to stay here? Oh, let's go away, Eddie." In the silence Eddie said, "It's not so bad." But his eyes also wandered around the isolated camp and he frowned at its emptiness.

Then determinedly, Ed picked up two of the suitcases, and said, "Well, come on, let's find where we stay." and started walking toward the first barrack. They climbed the chipped grey steps of the barrack and entered the hot gloom of the long hallway. On either side were two doors, leading to small apartments in this converted quonset hut. The sound of a strident hillbilly record came from an opened doorway. As Ed and Ann passed they saw on a blue overstuffed chair a plump woman in a red checked housedress. She was eating oranges and stuffing peelings in a brown paper sack on the floor. Her mouth was smeared with orange juice and her pale eyes stared at them unblinkingly. As she raised an orange to suck, the flesh along her upper arm swayed helplessly. Then she drawled a long slow "Hey".

The couple walked down the hall to the next door. This was to be their home. Ann gasped at what she saw. The empty room had been shut up for a long time and the air was hot and stale. Dust was stacked in gloomy corners, and the beaverboard walls were soiled. Ann looked at the beer stains on the floor and said, "Well, this looks like hell." Through the silence of the vacant room her voice slid with grating plaintiveness, "You expect me to live in this rat hole?"

Her husband walked possessively into the middle of the room and stood with his back to her. "Well, since when have you been so particular?" He clenched his hands and, staring out the grimy window, said, "Do you remember you didn't have running water at home? Remember that dogs crawled beneath the porch? And remember that you went half a mile just to get your mail? Just what the hell did you want here?" His voice broke with sarcasm. "If you're disappointed, go back." A moment of silence stood between them, then Ann said in a small voice, "Oh Eddie, honey, don't be cruel. It's different from what I thought it'd be, that's all." She walked up to him and they stood in the middle of the room. Ann, close to his still turned back, raised her hand up to his shoulder. "Eddie?" He turned and put his arms around her without a word.

As they stood together, they forgot the vacancy around them, the beer stains on the floor and the crawling black bugs outside. They felt a sheltering protectiveness around them, and Ann buried her disappointment.

He ruffled her hair and said, "I'll go get the rest of the suitcases," and then she was alone. She looked at the walls made of beaverboard and she thought, "Like living in a match box." She moved restlessly around in the middle of the room, and then walked back to the dinette. She walked within the alcove with slow and measured steps as if she were pacing off the footage. At the opposite end from the window was the kitchen with its units shaped like a "U" against the wall. There was an unearthly sky-blue sink in the center with an exposed rusty drain going down into a hole in the floor. The floor was covered by a cracked green and cream linoleum which was worn into a shade of muddy brown and curled down around the edge of the hole. While she watched, one large and dark cockroach slipped out of the hole and ran quickly with a sickening assurance across the floor, close to her shoe, and up the yellow cupboard.

Ann's throat tightened with repulsion. As she walked back to the living room, she heard, "Hey honey, I'm back." Eddie came in with the suitcases, bumping against the door. "Eddie. . ." she shouted, a little too loudly, "there are bugs here."

"Well, we'll do something about them." He was preoccupied with setting down an armload of seven suitcases. "The important thing now is to get settled." Then Ann said, "Eddie, what are we going to do about furniture?"

"Hell fire, how should I know? You're a woman, you ought to know what to do." His blue eyes behind their pale lashes glared at her accusingly. "Me?" The wail vibrated in the air. "Me? Well, how should I know? You're in the army, you knew what to expect." Her mouth tightened into a single line, and then exploded. "Oh, I give up. There are bugs and sand everywhere, and nothing is like I thought it would be." She sobbed and turned her back on him.

Then in front of her eyes the cockroach moved over the corners of sand that had seeped in through the loose window panes. She stood fascinated as it crawled over a mound of sand. The roach was so large and heavy that it left a trail behind its body in the sand. Then, defying gravity with a horrible casualness, it crawled down the wall. Determinedly it started across the floor to the living room. Ann screamed hysterically, and pointed, "There it is, Ed. Kill it. Kill it!

Don't let it get in here!"

He dropped the bag he was holding and ran toward the roach. It turned and sped along the shadowed baseboard. Ed brought his heavy foot down heavily an inch behind it but it slithered into a crack and was gone. "Missed him! Well, we can get some powder or something," he said. Ann started sobbing uncontrollably and when Eddie tried to put his arms around her she pushed him away. He looked at her in amazement and said, "My God, Ann, if you're going to cry over a little bug you're going to have a hell of a time keeping house." He paused but Ann kept on crying. Then he said gently, "Now Annie, we're used to things like that. We can kill him, Annie—him and his whole gosh-dern family!" At that she threw her arms around his neck, and he held her close while she quietly cried.

When Ann grew more calm in his arms Eddie laughed. "I'm beginnin' to feel funny, standin' in the middle of an empty room and nothin' to sit on. Tell you what let's do, honey. You go out to the PX here and get somethin' to eat. I'll see the sergeant and meet you later; we can go into town and pick up some furniture and stuff, and then tomorrow we can set up housekeepin'." He paused and said encouragingly, "We'll kill the bugs, too. Come on honey, look happier." She sighed and looked around, then up into his eyes. "Well, all right, Ed. Maybe we can do somethin'." He patted her shoulder and then he was gone.

She stood alone in the vacant room. An emptiness swelled up in her throat. She put her hands to her head, trying to forget the black bugs and the sand, the heat and the birds in the sky. She turned and faced the room. She looked at the cobwebs in the corners and the dried stains on the floor. She thought of the cockroach in the wall, and of all the shiny black ones outside, and of the vultures circling overhead, permanently. Then she ran through the door and down the long beaverboard hall. She ran all the way back to the bus stop.

Far down the desert road, coming from the city, was a truck, shimmering in the mid-afternoon sun. She laughed, and never knew she laughed. She took a deep breath and watched the truck coming through the heat waves. Then she looked up at the eternity of the sky, where the vultures were timelessly circling the desert. She could hear the rum-

ble of the powerful motor, and she looked quickly back to the road. The truck gradually enlarged until it seemed to rush at her and the motor pounded in her ears. The truck came between her and the sun and the pink mountains, and then it stopped.

"Want a ride?" a voice came from the window.

She looked up and said slowly, "Yes—yes, I do!"

"Well, then, get in."

She climbed the high steel step, and when she looked up at the sky, the circling vultures were still above her.

With a low, majestic hum the motor turned over and the truck glided down the road. Back by the stop, a long black bug was squashed into the dust. The liquid from its broken body was quickly being absorbed into the sand; and the shadow of the vulture passed over it.

Come October

By Frances Echols

City slickers move to the country
with utter chaos resulting

Square dances, quilting bees, and
Corn shucking contests
4-H er's instead of children
And Saturdays down town

Peas n cawn bread; hominy n grits
Ma, Pa, Wilbur and 2 fat mules
Red clay roads with gooes mud traps
Seresha Lespedisa (that's just plain grass)

Gluttinous horses and pigs more so
Old tool sheds, a rooster named Big Ben
Barnes n cribs, troughs n stalls

(Whoever said the country was peaceful?)

Pepper

By Betty Jo Benton

The autumn air was fresh and crisply cool and smelled of clean earth, baked bread, and frying ham. The citizens of Peachtree had long since been up and had already done the morning chores. Now they were eating breakfast and everyone was in a hurry; fathers were anxious to get to work; mothers were worried about marketing and house cleaning; and children were in a hurry because today was Saturday and there was no school.

There was much activity going on behind the doors of the neat white houses that bordered Jackson Street. Suddenly, a sharp, tuneless whistle pierced the air. Curtains moved at the spotless windows, and faces, all kinds of faces, looked in one direction, down the street, in the direction of that whistle. A boy and a dog came walking out of the rising sun, and the faces at the window moved from side to side, some frowning, some laughing, and some just looking, looking and waiting expectantly.

The sun set the boy's tumbled red curls on fire. His thin face with its high cheek bones and short pointed nose and chin looked as if it had been splattered with amber paint, so thick were the freckles. They were even on his red crab-shell ears and under the columns of his scrawny neck. Beneath almost invisible red eyebrows were his eyes, a startling clear blue that shocked you at first glance. His pale thin mouth was puckered in a whistle. It was entirely without tune, rhythm, or even sense. It was just a whistle. There was a little line between his eyes, and a secret little smile played over his face.

He wore a faded blue shirt that left his long freckled arms uncovered about half-way between the elbow and wrist, and his blue jeans, much washed and patched, looked as if they had long since given up trying to cover the boy's gangling legs. He was barefoot and as he walked, his toes dug into the earth between the flagstones. He had an old leather jacket slung over one shoulder and carried a brown paper bag in one of his large awkward hands.

An old overgrown bird dog hesitantly followed him eyeing his master with a half-expectant and half-fearful look.

"Ma, here comes Pepper! He looks funny today—like sump'n was gonna happen." The little girl in pigtails turned from the window to her mother, a pleasant, contented looking woman with curling brown hair.

"Yes, Susie. He does look funny today. I think you'd better play inside this morning—"

"But ,Ma, I wanna play with Pepper—an' you said he was a nice boy, Ma."

"I know, Susie, but, well, it looks like it might be one of those days, one of those Pepper days."

"Ohhhhh," said Susie understandingly, and mother and daughter watched the boy they called Pepper pass by their house.

"Hmph," said Mrs. Wiggins with pursed lips and disgusted tone to her aging mother who sat at the breakfast table. "There goes that Pepperton boy walkin' down the street as big as you please. He's up to somethin'. You can tell by that look in his eye. It's the same look he had that time he got in Bill Whitson's boat and started floatin' down the river. It took half the men and the boats in this town to catch up with him. His name should have been Trouble, but no, his crazy people call him Pepper. Humph! Pepper! They even named his dog Salt, to go with Pepper, they said. Fool notions for crazy people, I always say. And there he goes, the devil in his eye—"

"Well, I declare, Ben, there goes Pepper, the little rascal. And it looks like we're in for it again. Remember when the old Fielding place burned down and so many people kept jumpin' outa that second story window into the net? He'd had 'leven jumps 'fore they come to find out it was just Pepper runnin' in that burnin' building so's he could jump into that net. Cute little feller, though—"

The stout comfortable woman chuckled with memory, and the thin graying man, Ben, said, "Yeh, Martha, an' he couldn't understand why they wouldn't let him jump any more. How old is he now? Eleven? Twelve?"

"Somethin' like that. Hello there, Pepper."

"Hi, Mrs. Martin," and Pepper waved a hand as he turned the corn-

er on to Main Street. Store-keepers were sweeping the walks in front of their stores, and Mr. Jenkins, owner and operator of Jenkins' Reliable Plumbing Shop, was perched on a ladder outside his store trying to put up the new rainbow-colored sign that proclaimed Jenkins' Reliable Plumbing Shop as the best and most well-equipped plumbing shop in town, but then, Mr. Jenkins was modern and he believed in advertising.

Pepper paused a moment to watch the work and admire the new sign and then walked on crossing under the ladder.

"Hey, there, Pepper, don't you know it's bad luck to walk under a ladder?" Mr. Jenkins called after the skinny figure.

"Let me tell you, Bud Jenkins," said the man with the pipe between his teeth who was sprawled on the door step, "If there's any bad luck to be had, *you'll* be the one a-havin' it!" Both men looked after Pepper and nodded in agreement.

As he passed by Brandon's Grocery Store, Pepper stopped to talk with Pop Brandon and his nephew, Eli Thomas, who helped Pop run the store. Pop was a big burly man with a jolly smile and apples in his cheeks. His pot belly was covered by an enormous white apron, and he dwarfed the blond nervous young man who stood beside him.

"Greetings, Pepper. And where are you off to so early this mornin'?"

"Oh, I don't know, Mr. Brandon. Salt and me's just out for a little walk, ain't we, Salt?" Salt agreed with a weary wag of his tail. "Yep, we're just out for a little walk. Well, come on Salt. We'll be seein' ya, Mr. Brandon."

"Eli, you mark my words, we're gonna hear from that boy today. I recognize the look on his face." Pop Brandon grinned as he watched the boy go down the street. "Yessir. He passed by the store lookin' like that very same way the mornin' Joe Shannon left his new red motorcycle out in front of the drug store. Remember? Pepper got on the thing and 'afore a soul knew whut was happenin' the durn thing exploded and started off down the road with Pepper holdin' on for dear life. Old Miz Putnam nearly passed out, she was so scared, and I never will forget how the milkman's horse jumped up and took off in the opposite direction, the milk cans a rattlin' and a rollin' down the street. Old man Barney's cow stopped givin' milk and his chickens stopped layin' after Pepper broke through his barnyard and scared 'em half to death.

But, when he rode through Miz Carson's wash a-hangin' on the line, I thought I'd die. He had a shirt over his head and the sleeves were flappin' in the air. Goodness knows what would a-happened if he hadn't rode into that haystack. When they found him he wuz a sittin' on a nest o' duck eggs with that ole duck just a-quackin' at him. And you know what he said when they pulled him out? He said—whut—happened?"

"Mornin', Mr. Pendergast, mornin' Mr. Clemens," said Pepper to the two men standing on the corner. "Mornin' Pepper." They watched him turn the corner into the County Square.

"Wonder where Pepper's goin'?" said Mr. Pendergast, the wiry gray-haired man to his companion, a short chubby, bald fellow.

"Don't know, Jeb. Looks like he's headin' for the old clock tower. Cain't imagine what he'd want there, though. The old clock ain't run for fifty-odd years, and he sure cain't hurt *it* none."

"No, sure cain't. That's the clock that rich old Mr. Clark gave to the town, isn't it? They say a couple a days after they installed it, it just quit runnin' sudden-like. Stopped right on twelve, too."

"Yep, an' they ain't never got it fixed. Matter o' fact, they *cain't* fix it. They had clock makers and repairers from all over this country come here, but nobody never could make it run. I was just a boy an' I remember that it had four different chimes, and two angels marched around that tower every hour on the hour—that is, 'til it stopped. They even had a man by the name o' Hermann Schleiner come over here from Switzerland, and *he* couldn't even do anything with it. I guess it'll never run."

A group of boys and girls who were playing in the square looked up from their game of marbles and some of them ran to Pepper saying, "Hi, Pepper. Wanta play? You can shoot first! Where you goin', Pepper?"

"No, I'm busy now. I'll see you later."

Pepper walked on up the square and stopped in front of the tallest building in Peachtree, a brownstone building, musty with age and covered with ivy. He tilted his head and looked up to the very top of the tower where the face of the old clock with its hands stopped on twelve looked out over Peachtree. Then he nodded his head in satisfaction and

turned to his dog.

"Salt, you stay here. You're too old to climb all those stairs." Then he turned and went into the old building.

Salt settled himself on the sidewalk beside the steps as if he were accustomed to waiting for his master for indefinite periods of time.

Pepper started up the stairs taking them one at a time slowly and without hurrying. Then he decided he would get there faster if he tried two or three steps at a time. So pulling himself by the old railing he continued his climb upward.

After a moment, he stopped to rest a while and drew a long breath. He looked around at the bare dusty yellow walls and slowly, thoughtfully, a smile crept over his face. He reached into a side pocket of his jeans and drew out several handfuls of such articles as bent pins, rubber bands, a couple of marbles, a small rubber ball, a length of twine, a bamboo whistle, a battered pocket knife, a piece of bubble gum, a match box, and a tarnished key chain. Finally he found what he was looking for, a stubby black crayon. Nodding and smiling, he fingered the crayon and looked at the old plastered walls. He put the other things back in his pocket, and using the crayon he wrote "Pepper" in a large childish backhand scrawl. He stood back and looked critically at his work. Then deciding that it was really very good, he continued up the stairway, stopping every four or five steps to make another work of art. He finally reached the top of the stairs and walked into the small room and over to the window that was just over the face of the clock.

He looked down at the tiny people scrambling about below and nodded again with a secret smile. Then from his back pocket he took a sling shot and looked at it for a long moment. Nodding again he threw down his leather jacket and climbed onto the window sill. He put the brown bag on the sill and opened it up. Reaching in he pulled out a smooth shiny pebble. He fitted it to the rubber band and looked down.

"Let's see. Where's me a good target? I gotta practice my aim for that contest Bill and me's in next week. If I hit somethin' from way up here, I ought to be able to hit anything anywhere. I'll see if I can't hit the sign over there. Wup! I missed it. There, I got it that time. Now let's see, there's ole Jim Bean bendin' over plain' marbles over there. I'll just hit—No, I better not. I might hurt him. But I'll hit that can

next to him. Got it! Boy, just look at him lookin' around. He don't know whut happened."

Pepper kept practicing each time hitting or missing something different. Once he hit the top of Mrs. Burns' parasol. Another time, he grazed the left flank of the garbage man's horse, causing it to jump up a little spilling garbage in the street. He knocked out the light in the street lamp post, and by this time people were beginning to wonder if it was a shower of meteorites falling on the square. Then who should appear on the scene but Mr. Van Skike, the town banker. He was wearing his usual morning attire consisting of dark trousers and a dark top coat. He carried a cane over his arm and of all things, wore a nice tall silk hat on his pointed head. Mr. Van Skike stopped to talk to some of the townspeople in his own blustering way and Pepper seeing his chance to improve his marksmanship, reached down for another pebble, but the bag was empty! He looked wildly about for something that would serve the purpose but couldn't find a thing.

"Oh, heck, I've just got to hit that hat—but what can I use? Wait a minute—" He ran over to the glass door that covered the works of the clock and saw a nice heavy brass bolt that was just the right size. He thought, "It can't hurt this old clock and I've just got to hit that hat!" So he opened the door and twisted and turned the bolt 'til it came off and ran over to the window ready to shoot.

There was a whir behind him and a clanking of turning wheels and all of a sudden Pepper heard bells ringing—four bells all at once. He looked down and saw the angels marching around on the little platform below the face of the clock. He looked further down and saw the people standing around or running back and forth over the square. He laughed a little because they looked so funny, and the bells kept ringing behind him.

"What is it?"

"What's happened?"

"The world's coming to an end!"

"The clock started running after fifty years!"

The sea of faces shielded from the sun by protecting hands looked up of one accord and their mixed emotions written on them. Some were fearful, some were glad, some were puzzled, and the rest just

looked at the clock with their mouths hanging wide open.

"It's a miracle!"

No—wait a minute. It's not a miracle. It's Pepper!"

"Pepper?"

"It is Pepper!"

Pepper had his flaming head poked out of the window and was grinning down at them.

"Come on down, Pepper!"

When Pepper finally appeared in the doorway he stood there as if nothing had happened. The bells were still ringing, but they didn't bother him a tall. His leather jacket was slung around his shoulder and his sling shot hung out of his pocket accusingly, but luckily unnoticed. He leaned casually against the door frame with his bare feet crossed and his thumbs hanging out from his belt. The people who could stand it no longer burst upon him firing questions at him by the dozen.

"How'd you know how to do it, Pepper?"

"What'd you do to make it run again?"

"Where'd you learn about clocks?"

"Quiet everybody," shouted Mr. Van Skike, the banker, waving his cane commandingly over the crowd. Let's hear what Pepper has to say. How *did* you do it, my boy?"

Pepper, sensing his moment of triumph and perfectly willing to make the most of it, said slowly—casually—"Well, I don't rightly know, Mr. Van Skike. I just sat up there and looked and figgured and practiced and finally, I just twisted a little ole bolt and the wheels started turnin' and the bells started ringin' and the angels started marching around. Well sir, that's all I guess—."

"That's all he says. Why the boy's too modest! The finest minds in Europe couldn't make our clock run, and here, one of our own boys has the genius to repair it. I say we owe this young man a debt of gratitude. What do you say?"

For answer, the people raised their voices in a roar of praise and their hands in a thunder of applause. Pepper just stood there casually leaning on the door sill, listening to the crowd and smiling to himself. Then he drew himself up and said, "Well folks, I got to go. I have some business to take care of."

Green Water

By Jean Cline

The green water whirled and foamed and smashed
against the green mossy rocks,
as higher and higher sprays of angry water dashed.
On the stony clift a stormy battle was being fought.
He said no, he said yes, and the man cried,
"Please, please don't torture me like this."

On and on the losing battle raged,
until all was lost and none prevailed.
With steps of anguish, dread and fear the tormented man,
with face of pain, moved closer to the growling darkness;
but nearer and nearer the voice came low,
"You did it and now you must go-go-GO."

The fight was lost:
The fighters had gone;
And with the dying wind over the rusted rocks;
A moan for the night's tomorrow.

The Lion's Den

By Ola Barrow

A Silver bird—a no tongue
blabber with a little body
relating facts and phantasies

A song it hums while covering
the floor Jacob's ladder and
many more a bewildered lamb

Daniel in the lion's den
asking for a drink before
the downbeat of the gavel

Junellen

By Anna Lukes

Now that it can do me no good I remember the funny feeling that passed over me quickly when I awoke this morning and looked out the window at the August mist. I know now it was a premonition. Fate have it, I was too busy at the time pouting about all the peaches I was to pick and peel for canning and about all the other work I had to do to pay any attention. As usual, someone was calling me to do something. This time it was Joel wanting me to come down to get the milk for the house, and I knew that my day of "Junellen do this and Junellen do that," had begun. I turned lazily on my side and listened to Joel wheel the milk to the milk house. Mom hasn't been well lately so Joel has been getting up an hour earlier to help Dad with the milking before going to the mill where he works. Mom has a bad case of rheumatic fever. She's a hard worker, though, and it's only when her legs can't support her that she stays in bed. A lot of people think Mom's older'n Dad. I guess she does look older with her white hair against Dad's coal black and all those worried lines all over her face. Dad's twice as heavy as Mom, though. One day he got worried about his weight and went to see Dr. Pharr, our town doctor. Dr. Pharr told Dad there was nothing to worry about, and that he should keep right on eating as much as usual, for he was just naturally heavily built. The doctor's office is next to the Grand Theatre, our only movie, and the stairs leading to his office look like something found in ghost stories. They're made of creaking wood and droop in from wear in the center just like the old mattress in the cellar did before Mom took it off Joel's bed and bought him a new one. I'll never forget the first time I went to Dr. Pharr's office. I was seven and my right index finger had practically been chopped off by the butcher knife I'd knocked off the table with the ball I was playing. Dad saw my finger dangling in the air and he got so scared, he carried me to the big truck we had then and rushed me to Dr. Pharr. Our farm is about three miles to Dr. Pharr's office down town. It usually takes Dad a quarter of an hour to get there but on that day

he made it in such a hurry I feared I'd lose my breath before we got there. My finger looked so terrible and it hurt so much, I cried all the way. Mom, who had come along to comfort me, kept telling me that everything was going to be all right and to please stop crying. I didn't pay any attention to her, though, because I was remembering all the mean things the girls at school had said about Dr. Pharr such as cutting off people's arms and legs. I kept thinking he was going to cut my arm off too and I shook in spasms everytime I imagined a big knife coming at me. But I soon found out Dr. Pharr was real nice and he didn't butcher people. He was sorry he had to put stitches in my finger and when I saw how sad he looked thinking he was frightening me I told him I wasn't afraid and that I didn't mind the stitches. I tried not to hear the c l i n k - c l i n k i n g of the milk jugs as Joel emptied them off the wheelbarrow into the milk house. It's the newest building on the farm and is the first one to the right as you come up the driveway. It used to be on the other siide of the barn before Dad tore it down and built this one four years ago. Ed Phelps, the man who picks up the milk, said so himself that the present location is a much more convenient one especially for him because he doesn't have to pass the house and worry about falling into any of the ditches leading to the barn. Ed loads the milk in his truck just before noon every day and delivers it for us to the Meadowfield Dairy in the afternoons after he has collected the rest of the milk from the neighboring farms. He charges each farmhouse thirteen dollars a month to haul the milk. One day I sat down and figured out exactly how much money Ed makes. I don't remember the exact amount right now but I do remember it was a lot. Even so, I wouldn't like his job because it's monotonous and requires working every day of the year. The milk checks we get every month from the dairy just about cover all our farm expenses which are few compared to the other farms around here. There's the feed for the chickens and the cows, artificial breeding for the cows and a little sum for the farmers who come over during harvesting with their tractors to help harvest the oats, wheat and hay. We plant and pull our own corn and gather the smaller crops and those are the days I dread. We stopped keeping hogs, pigs and sheep on the farm when Joel and Tom got jobs at the mill. That was over two years ago.

The breeze coming through the window made it feel more like October than August. It made me forget about Joel calling. I hugged the covers tightly around me and buried the left side of my face in the pillow. Like someone hypnotized, my thoughts began to drift among stars, and I saw lights from unknown sources blazing at me as I danced in a white star-studded dress across a neverending stage. My breathing was the orchestra. The harder the contraction, the more beautiful and vivid the dance. Somewhere from the back of my mind I heard a pounding and a voice that seemed to come from the dead. The picture shattered and I became aware of the thump-thumping against the wall under my window. It was Joel and he called, "Junellen, hurry down and get the milk!" He sounded mad. I threw the covers back quickly, hurried up to press my nose against the window screen and called that I'd be down in a minute. A whiff of air greeted me in the face as I did. I patted my hands against the sides of my arms and curled up my shoulders to keep warm as I crossed the room for my jeans and heavy shirt. I got into my clothes, crawled on my hands and knees to pull out my shoes from under the bed, toed into them, and started for the stairs. I never bother anymore about combing my short hair. It looks the same before and after a comb has been run through it. And anyway it's tiresome looking in the mirror at the same old pug nose and freckled cheekbones. I passed the parlor and was halfway through the dining room when the staleness of dead cigarette butt ends caught at my throat. I glanced toward the parlor and noticed the full ash trays. I remembered that Mr. Jasom and Mr. Flitts, our neighbors, had been over last night discussing some kind of business with Dad, so I took the ash trays and emptied them in the waste can in the kitchen. Mom never lets us open the parlor and dining room windows because of the dust and sometimes it gets real stuffy like it was then. I set the polished trays back in place and hurried to the kitchen where the air was fresh. I had forgotten again about the milk and I poured myself a glass of water. It was when I heard Joel come up the cement steps from the side of the house facing the barn that I remembered the empty milk bottles on the sink. I grabbed them and ran for the other door. Outside I noticed that the sun was coming out to make the day almost too pretty to be spent inside peeling peaches after

the picking was done and the sky to sparkle mysteriously like my cousin Jane's blue eyes did when she fell in love. I noticed, too, that our biggest peach tree, the one next to the milk house, had a lot of peaches on top and that I'd need the big ladder to get to them if they didn't fall when I shook the tree. I finally got the milk and I hurried to the kitchen. Dad came in for breakfast then so I hastened to scatter a loaf of bread on a tray and shoved it in the oven to toast. The eggs are kept in the refrigerator in a bowl behind some jars and I had to hold the jars in my arms to get the bowl. When I had the bowl, something irritated my arm and made it jerk and I lost hold of the bowl and the eggs crushed to the floor. The sight of the squashed eggs on the floor petrified me and before I could move, Dad raised his voice and ordered me to clean up the mess, immediately! I tried not to think about what I'd done as I replaced the jars and cleared the floor. Then before I could get back to the toast it was burning, and Dad was pulling the tray of burnt bread out of the oven and saying mean things about me. That was when I ran up to my room. Upstairs I kept telling myself it was just another one of my bad dreams and that I'd wake up any minute and hear Joel call me to get the milk. But it was foolish trying to believe this because everything was so real and frightening. Dad called me from below to come fix breakfast. I hated to go and told myself over and over I wasn't going and that fifteen horses couldn't pull me down. But when I heard Mom shifting around in her room and talking to herself like she does when she gets mad at me, I opened the door and ran downstairs. I always start crying when I'm not supposed to. I did then and I couldn't see to do anything right. Dad sent me out of the kitchen. I didn't go back to my room but out the front door and up beside the rosebushes. I kept near them all the way to the highway so that if Mom were at her window she wouldn't see me. On the highway I turned left and walked till I came to where a thin path leads to a big apple tree and I followed it to the tree. I sat on the stump I had used till it looked sanded and I dried my face with my shirt tail. I sat there a long time knowing that everytime Dad got mad at something wrong out in the field that day he'd think of me and blame me for the trouble, all because of this morning.

Playing Marbles

By Jean Cline

As the morning sun rose over the misty mountains, only a few of its shining rays crept through the spraying rain. Finally as a patch of lightning beams reached the soaked earth it showed in its dim circle of light a group of boys, all black and shining from the cleaning rain. As the rain grew still harder the little red-eyed boys, each in his turn, shot for the lone marble lost in the prison-like circle, as a golden fish in its searching path around the fish bowl.

At last, when all the small boys had tried to hit the remaining marble and none had succeeded, a new face peeped over the mountains of black backs.

The small white face said, showing his toothless gums as though an honor had been bestowed upon them, "Gimmie a marble and I'll bet you my long blade knife I'll hit it."

Then as three red-pink mouths formed well trained O's the well dressed but dirty little boy bent low over the muddy ground and with one blue eye closed carefully, knocked the gleaming ball into the grass.

"See there, what did I tell you," the cocky little boy said as he climbed triumphantly to his feet.

"You sho is good, maybe yawl could teach us to play like that," said the smallest of the Negro boys.

"How come you think I would teach a nigger something, anyway you wouldn't have the sense to hit it after I showed you how."

"Please, I promise I won't be dumb, I'm smart anyhow. I ain't like all the other niggers, 'cause my teacher say I waz smart and if she says I'm smart then brother I'm sho-nough smart."

"What'll you give me if I waste all my time trying to show you dumb niggers to shoot?"

The tallest black boy unknowingly raised a stringy arm and scratched his short greasy hair with color drained finger tips and after a few seconds said, "I got a bag of marbles heah that I done won this heah morning and if you will learn me de game I'll be giving yawl the whole blessing sack of them and if yawl do a good job I'll throw in my big'one

I done hid in my pocket."

"Me I've got a real live turtle hid under my bed, that is if he ain't done got restless and crawled out and Ma ain't done throwed him out the back door."

With a wide smile the little white boy nodded his curly blond head and then glancing at the smallest ragged boy said, "Well, what are you going to give me, I can't be giving away good secrets for nothing."

The boy looked down at the soggy mud and as he made a highway through the jungle of the world said in a low squeeking voice, "I guess yawl'll have to leave me out 'cause I ain't got nothing to give except me, but who would want a little ole nigger to follow him around everywhere? 'Cause if you took me I would just do everything for you, you wouldn't even have to make yo bed 'cause I'd be right there awaitin' to do it."

"Well since you don't have anything else I guess that will hafta do, but listen this isn't just for today, you had better be close around when I need you."

Then as a broad grin covered the shining faces of the boys, they all fell untiringly to the ground and began a timeless game.

On and on it rained and finally as the fighting sun crept through a forgotten hole in the wall of clouds the white boy got triumphantly to his feet and with the tiny black boy close behind him, crawled through the broken fence and two untamed children ran unthinkingly off into the distant world of wonder.

Address of Dr. Faust

By Jean Weldy

Hail to thee, Lucifer, god of the glowing depths,
Come out of thy bloody triumphant mount
And give me thy frothy cup of youth.
God of flame and stone, ascend from thy realm
To claim this aged heart and leave a lustful pulse.
And after this crude world, thy echoing caverns,
Adorned in gold and silver, lighted to glistening
With leaping, lapping fire, shall call to me, your servant.

Boy in the Stall

By Frances Echols

The thin beam of light crept slowly over the hard clay. Wearing rabbit-fur bedroom slippers the boy stepped across the road, clutching his pencil flashlight. He eased the barnyard gate open, and then snapped the light out. The moon was so big and white he could see the old trailer with its jutting tongue. The pile of rotten lumber left from the barn almost gave him away, they creaked so as he crawled over. He was an Indian stalking a deer and he must be very quiet.

Closer and closer he got—then the excited murmur of voices made him forget he was an Indian, and he was again a small boy groping in the dark, trying to find out what was wrong. He slipped breathlessly through the bob-wire gap. He knew it was past his bedtime and he had no business being out. He had heard a lot of noise. Perhaps it was the new pony for him! Yeah, that's what it is! and they had it in one of the barn stalls. Now he could really play cowboy with John Phillip. He wouldn't have to wait any longer for Beauty's colt. He was getting tired of walking all the way to the Big Pasture every day to see if Beauty was any fatter. Mother had said that when Beauty's sides got real big and fat, she'd have a colt—it would be all his when it grew up. But that was an awful long time.

The moon went behind a cloud, and he stuffed his stiff hands into the two small pockets, still holding his pencil flashlight—he must be careful with it, three box tops and ten cents of his own allowance it had cost. He crept a little closer; he could barely make out the blurry shapes hunched over the top rail of the stall—there was Mother, Daddy, his older sister, Sally, and Old Will, the Negro hired man. If it was just a new pony, why did their voices sound so worried and excited, and why did they keep staring and staring into the stall? He crouched a few feet nearer.

"Look, look! Those movements are going up and back now. And those spasms of trembling are getting closer together. You'd better hurry and call the vet, Cy. Quick! Ask him what we should do!"

What did his mother mean? Was his new pony sick? He'd heard a kind of moan and hoofs stamping, so he knew it was a horse. Maybe it just wanted its mother like he had when——. The horse must be really kicking the boards out of the side of the barn. He wasn't so sure he was gonna like that pony if it was that mean.

"Hurry, Cy, go call the vet! I believe there's something really wrong."

His Daddy rushed out of the barn and saw him hunched by the barn door peering in, but only had time to say, "What are you doing out here? Go to bed," then ran through the yard and Stephen heard the front door slam.

He felt somethiing soft whang up against his leg two or three times, and recognizing the tail-wagging of his puppy, Penny, he reached down to pet her. But Penny, feeling the tense excitement, danced furiously around in circles switching her rump. It was then that his mother turned and saw him standing forlornly in the shadows of the building.

"Why, Stephen, what in the world are you doing up from bed and standing out here in the cold? You run on back to bed now. You shouldn't be out here. Go on back to the house!"

Turning back slowly the little pajama-clad figure twisted hopelessly trying to see past the boards, people, and straw, into the stall where the heavy breathing of an animal could be heard.

"But Mother, please, Mother, can't I see what's wrong with my pony? Is it hurt or what? Isn't that my pony?"

"No, this isn't your pony, Stephen—it's Beauty and she's awfully sick. Now run on back to bed—there's nothing you can do out here but catch cold. Run on, honey."

He turned toward the barnyard gate. Dragging his feet in the dirt—he didn't care if he did ruin his bedroom slippers, served her right for making him go to bed. It wasn't fun to go in the dark by yourself. He'd climb through the corn crib window and peek through a crack in a board and he could see better 'n they could. He'd crouch down low. And it was pretty dark and they'd never see him. When he tried to slick down his hair, Mother always said it looked like wet straw, so maybe they'd think he was just more straw.

The tail end of his pajamas had just barely slipped through the opening when Old Will shuffled slowly by, carrying a milk pail filled with

clear water.

"Mebbe dis heah'll hep de pore lil hoss, Miz Mary. Ah'll jest ease myself in dis othah stall an mebbe she'll drink some."

"Oh, Will, be careful now. Don't get close to her, you don't know what she's liable to do. The way she's been kicking and stamping—"

"Now Miz Mary, don't you fret about me. Dis lil hoss knows ah'm a-heppin her. But jest the same, ah ain gittin too familiar wid de groun her hind legs am standing on."

Someone flicked the flashlight button and little specks of sawdust danced in the ghostly beam. The white light stopped, as if staring fascinated into the watery eyes of the suffering animal.

"Don't shine the light directly in her eyes, it's liable to frighten her. We want to keep her still and quiet as possible. I wonder what's keeping Cy?"

The boy scarcely heard his mother's low voice talking on as he stared transfixed through the slit board at the trembling body of the small brown and white horse standing in a dim corner of the stall.

He was shocked at the sight of Beauty—especially at the look in her eyes. He had always loved them— they were so big and round and they tilted up at the corners. They were suffering eyes, eyes that seemed to blame the quiet, staring human eyes that could only guess at the agony and pain. The tiny doll-like legs and feet barely had the strength to support the slowly swaying animal. Again and again a retching, belching movement that could easily be seen under the stretching skin would sweep through her body causing her to lurch heavily against the wall for support. At times the pain seemed too much for her to bear and summoning unknown strength she would lash out with hoofs.

And this frightened the boy. He was so scared that he didn't even feel the little tingling needles pricking his feet and numbing his legs. So scared that his nose didn't even wrinkle at the penetrating, undeniable smell of the barn. So scared that he didn't think, but flinched and cringed automatically when the hoofs beat the walls. So scared that his eyes were big and bulging and staring. And he didn't understand.

All the watching eyes were unmoving. They watched Beauty's nostrils quiver in naked terror and her dainty knees jerked spasmodically.

Dried-up red clay was caked on her swollen sides. Moonbeams glinted through the pineknots and glared at the shaking brown and white belly. The lovely trimmed tail that was once so sparkling, shining and erect in a fast side prance, hung still and tired, except for an occasional furious switch of rebellion. Foamed masses of green saliva collected at the sides of her mouth and dribbled steadily to the ground.

The boy's eyes felt hot and stinging and he struggled to keep the lids pushed back into his head. His doubled-up body was cramped and stiff but his thoughts were wide awake and staring.

He watched his mother as she stretched out her hand to the suffering mare and the low sweet voice that comforted him so many times tried to soothe and quiet the terrified animal.

Excited footsteps sounded through the cold air and Stephen squeezed himself flatter in his hiding place as his father ran into the barn.

"That damn quack! So he doesn't make night calls, huh? Says he's a dog specialist! So he doesn't operate on horses, huh? By damn, he'll operate on this one or I'll operate on him!"

"Cy, quit shouting! Calm down. What took you so long? Is the veterinarian coming?"

"Hell yes, he's coming. He oughta be here now. Said something about coming out at eight tomorrow morning and I told him to—There's his car now. Hey—down here! Hurry!"

A small man with greasy black hair walked with quick, mincing steps into the barn.

"Kinda late to be up horse nursing, huh folks? What's wrong with her? Stork taking too long to suit ya?"

"Please doctor, do something! She's been in hard labor for eight hours and I think something is wrong. She can't stand much more!"

"Now, Miz Odom, this isn't the first horse to have labor pains. She'll live through it. I'm gonna give her a shot that should hurry things up a little. Here nigger, come help me hold 'er still."

Weak as she was, Beauty jerked away from the rasping voice and the grabbing hands that held only a gob of matted brown and white hair. Will moved slowly toward the wide-eyed creature, gently speaking in a loving Negro tone.

"Hold up, lil hoss. Come 'roun', now, come 'roun'. Old Will ain

gonna hurt ya none."

Beauty responded by merely flinching when he laid his dark gnarled hand on her shoulder. The doctor moved fast and Beauty was cornered, helpless.

The boy gritted his small teeth and felt a hard knot rise in his stomach as he watched the long needle slide into the trembling flesh. He knew how it hurt; he'd had a typhoid shot once and the memory of the sharp pain made goose pimples pop out all over him and his eyes stung. His mother was white and shaking almost as much as Beauty. If this was what getting a new pony took, he'd never, never want another one.

The muscles of the horse's body were visibly relaxing. The retching and belching stopped and the mare lay still on the fresh hay. The pool of green foam grew no deeper. But her eyes did not change.

The tense vigilance of the numbed group relaxed slowly. They looked at one another and smiled shakily. Suddenly the mare jerked like a hooked fish yanked out of water. Her legs were straight out and stiff and her neck stretched back.

Portrait

By Pat Mayher

You lie there . . . still . . .
lifeless. Your cold wet hair
matted with sand and weed-
Your lips tinged with purple
deeper than your clammy skin-
Your once warm breasts now
drooping limply . . .

You lie there . . . dead . . .
people crowding, staring - pleased with
mere excitement. Damn pleasure . . .
drawing more to gather, gaze,
go . . . satisfied-
And you don't even know your feet
are cold.

Exemplary Notes on Cummings' Poetry

By Pat Mayher

Just what is the formula by which literature should be judged? It seems that those who want a yardstick want literature to remain in constant equilibrium. For art, equilibrium means death. Literature lives and breathes because of its variety rather than for its uniformity.

One of the characteristics of much of today's contemporary poetry is that it is concerned with an analysis of the state of man's mind for philosophic or social comment. To me, E. E. Cummings' poetry seems not to conform with this trait, but to express in an unconventional way the half-spoken, half-muttered thoughts carried on within himself, by which he presents an argument and succeeds in defining it indirectly.

E. E. Cummings says that art is a mystery. He very convincingly hates the why or because or although of rational scrutiny.

Many people are tremendously resistant to unfamiliar techniques and it seems unfortunate that there are still those who see only broken bones of syntax, typographical eccentricity, stanzas punctuated with a pepper shaker and that is all.

Many look at E. E. Cummings' poetry as merely a hodge-podge of question marks, exclamation points, parentheses and the like, expressing absolutely nothing but just looking cute. To me, the mechanics of his poetry is responsible for much of its effectiveness. It is not stable, but stability is not a characteristic of the world today nor do I think that it will ever be. In this world of atomic bombs, made obsolete by a hydrogen bomb and probably in the near future the hydrogen bomb being made obsolete by one made of oxygen, stability means inaction and inaction is the death of all art, of life itself.

To some, Cummings' poetry may be a distortion of words and lines, and the interest may be lost because of the puzzle. To others, that very distortion and puzzle are a way of making his poetry fresh, young and true, and Cummings' typography, more so than that of any other poet's, stands out as one of his most observable characteristics. His written version of a poem is a means of recording sound. Though some people

argue that poetry is to be heard and not seen, my argument is that if it succeeds in being pleasant to hear and at the same time succeeds in being pleasant to see, more power to the poet. Still another argument against his arrangement of lines and phrases is that it appeals so vividly to the visual sense that it leaves the realm of poetry entirely and enters the graphic arts. His unique arrangement succeeds in accomplishing a certain feature of sound quality that would otherwise be lost because Cummings has invented a tool by which those not knowing the language of phonetics could, without any effort, perceive his nuances:

applaws)
"fell
ow
sit
isn'ts"
(a paw s.

The introduction and the concluding verse are both separated by parentheses. The first word occupies two lines, and it tells the reader how to read the word aloud. The reader is able to perceive the printed symbol, and he realizes that this symbol stands for a particular type of pronounciation. The sound changes subtly but the sensitive reader is still able to feel the effects even though he does not understand how this effect is obtained. The second word,

sit
isn'ts"

which is a very untraditional arrangement of "citizens," gives a note of what Cummings wants the reader to hear. The important point is not the pronunciation of the "t" but the invoicing of the final voiced "s" which is so very characteristic of many foreigners' pronunciation of English. In the introductory and concluding phrases, "applause" and "pause" spelled untraditionally cause the reader to exaggerate the length of "aw." In the last line is the separation of the last sound of "pause," the invoiced "s" from the rest of the word. The effect is visual as well as auditory. Therefore, his arrangement is intentional because his typography is not solely for visual appeal, being intimately concerned with the phonetics of English. It is quite clear that his eccentric spelling and

arrangement have resulted in certain subtleties of accent, rhythm, sound quality and juncture which could scarcely have emerged in a traditional typography.

His treatment of punctuation does not distract or antagonize but definitely serves a purpose:

```
the
    sky
        was
can dy lu
minous
        edible
spry
     pinks sky
lemons
greens coo l choc
olate
s.
  un der,
  a lo
co
mo
  tive     s pout
                ing
                   vi
                   o
                   lets.
```

Here Cummings shows the reader where to pause. He also creates an atmosphere of surprise and suspense and causes the reader to read such lines as

```
the
   sky
      was
```

in a descending pitch.

The vocabulary Cummings employs is common folk speech in most instances. He believes in "upping" the price of "housing," "booking," "nosing," "flooring." As a rule, when the man of the street needs a verb, he makes it out of a noun. When Cummings wants a noun, he

makes it out of any other part of speech in the English language. Words he creates enable him to express reality of existence itself, which he so intently believes to be the fact and experience of being. His noun is for what "is" and "to be" is what Cummings wants most of man. The pure deep identity, the wonderful one times one is the beautiful mystery he celebrates.

Cummings' imagery is excellently beautiful. His images of trees that suddenly wait against the moon's face, of humble beauty, of the actual universe, are all images and idols of contemplation and expression.

His language is extremely sensuous, expressing thoughts about beautiful things simply, aiming at lyrical expression in a direct manner. With the most delicate and fragrant words, Cummings praises love in lines as

> (thee will i praise between those rivers whose
> white voices pass upon forgetting (fail
> me not) whose courseless waters are a gloat
> of silver; o'er whose night three willows wail,
> a slender dimness in the unshapeful hour
> making dear moan in tomes of stroked flower:
> let not thy lust one threaded moment lose:
> haste) the very shadowy sheep float
> free upon terrific pastures pale

In many instances crudeness definitely persists and much of the language that he uses is strictly slang, but slang with such vitality that it does not seem to be realized:

> Buffalo Bill's
> defunct
> who used to
> ride a watersmooth-silver
> stallion
> and break onetwothreefourfive pigeons justlikethat
> Jesus
> he was a handsome man
> and what i want to know is
> how do you like your blueeyed boy
> Mister Death

The tragedy of most peoples' lives is that they are unable to express

themselves — thinking that in order to express themselves best, they must use the most complicated forms available, but Cummings seems to have found a method which prevails throughout much of his poetry, that of writing as a child, using simple childish speech as in the poem about the balloonman:

in Just-
spring when the world is mud-
luscious the little
lame balloonman
whistles far and wee

The numerous technical unconventionalities that Cummings uses are essentially the method of his philosophy. Only with this assistance could he make his words bespeak the theme of being Nobody. It is evident that throughout his poems, the little "i" that he uses so often spells the ego. He exhibits an intense feeling for his own ego which to him is Nobody, and in turn, Nobody is anybody who doesn't think he is somebody. Cummings believes that Nobody is also the soul. This faculty of being nobody enables him in his own way to write about somebody, this somebody being the president of the United States, Cambridge ladies, other poets, without offense, even when it is directed at his own close relatives such as Uncle Daniel who

fought in the civil
war band and can play the triangle
like the devil)

Cummings is the first contemporary poet to crack at the nature theme, passionately cracking it wide open, tasting the implications and spirit without deviating American language, the language of a typical United States man who admits that he has plenty of Nothing.

His poetry is sometimes a balance between absurdity and slush, a combining of the cheap and tawdry, the good and splendid. Some of his poems are flippant, some sentimental, some start like rockets and come down like pancakes.

We might conclude that constancy is his aim. Cummings himself has said, "do you hear a Sound?" That sound is not promising or is it proving, explaining, excusing, meaning, selling, or buying. Truth does

not sell or buy. Truth sings. He hears it singing. By sound Cummings does not mean the sound heard by the ear but the sound heard by the inner sense. He believes that the truth of experience is not in experience itself, but in forming an idea comparable to music of the spheres. Truth is effective and powerful; it sings; it is beautiful.

Never An End?

By Jean Weldy

The lost! The ghost! A shell broken upon the hard-packed,
sandy shore!
The angry waves beat, recoil and beat—tormenting
my weary form.
They catch and throw a shredded rag about the snaggled rocks,
a dirty web of threads.
Oh, the misery of the broken—a one half left
upon a white forgotten beach.
A dream broken, a love unlived, birth without a death . . . time
endless, and a hell lashing about my small self left—
a tragedy of all!
My pallid, camellia-like hand goes over an
innocent rose, valiantly red, and
stifles out its breath.
Bruized the poor petals fall to the dirt, one and one.
Pricked to consciousness, I look down and see,
see, see . . .
I see and know not what I do. Something
hideous comes out of me . . . part scream, part
laugh, part prayer . . . Oh, God!
I don't know, I don't know, I don't . . . , I . . .
Crushed the rose! It was all I could do.

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